

The Mayor and Council of Hurlock

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JOYCE A. SPRATT
MAYOR
JOHN H. AVERY
CLERK / TREASURER

COUNCIL MEMBERS
CHRISTOPHER J. ADAMS
CHARLES T. CEPHAS, SR.
PARKER J. DURHAM
GARY L. HENRY
MICHAEL D. NORDSTROM

MINUTES OPEN SESSION MEETING October 28, 2013 6:00 P.M.

Mayor Spratt called the meeting of October 28, 2013, to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Hurlock Town Office located at 311 Charles Street. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Reverend Paul Bovankovich said the opening prayer. The roll call was then taken. Those in attendance were: Councilmembers Durham, Cephas, Nordstrom, Adams, Henry, Mayor Spratt, Attorney Robert Merriken, and Clerk Avery.

The Agenda was approved with a Motion made by Councilman Durham, who wished to add under New Business Ordinance 2013-2 on Tethering. Councilman Cephas, who wished to add under Old Business regulations reviewed by Attorney Merriken on the Charter Amendment, seconded the Motion. With no discussion, the Motion passed with a vote of 5-0.

The Minutes of the Open Session Meeting held on October 15, 2013 were approved. Councilman Nordstrom made a Motion to approve. Councilman Cephas seconded the Motion. The Motion was passed and carried with a vote of 5-0.

Mayor's Report – Mayor Spratt announced the Medical Center is still on target to open the middle of November.

The road repairs are complete for Taylor Avenue, Charles Street, N. Main Street, etc. The Mayor gave Clerk Avery and Public Works Dept. credit for overseeing the work being done. All work went very smoothly.

Mayor Spratt stated she received a telephone call today stating that property has been purchased for 3 new retail businesses coming to town. There will be an announcement made on November 21st as to what the businesses are.

County Councilman Rick Price Report – Councilman Rick Price reported the County Council introduced and voted unanimously on new legislation to have cameras installed

on some county school buses to try to cut down on motorists trying to go around the busses when students are boarding or discharging from the bus. An annual report from FY '13 from the County Economic Development stated some of the activities from the past year; an Economic Development Summit was attended by 130 individuals, assistance to 5 new businesses to open in the county, negotiating with 8 prospective tenants for the County Tech Park, securing Letters of Intent from two of those tenants, launching new digital communications including social media and a monthly newsletter. The County Council also approved the Board of Education's FY 15 capital improvement plan for planning purposes only contingent upon the next county budget and what funds are available. This will include a potential county match of \$411,000.00 for roof replacements for Hurlock Elementary School and South Dorchester K-8, as well as an architectural proposal for a new North Dorchester High School. Also reported that one and one-half million dollars of the FY'14 county funding committed to the Career and Technology Center had not been utilized so they were able to accomplish everything they needed to do. The Council also approved a list of roads to be surfaced treated. This includes 32 miles of tar and chip, 1.2 miles of dry patch at an estimated cost \$238,000.00, and the remaining funds which comes to \$274,000.00 would be set aside for road surface work in the spring due to a harsh winter. An economic development staff was directed to meet with County Planning and Zoning Staff to identify ways to break down barriers to existing businesses that want to expand and new businesses that want to locate in the county. Halloween will be held on October 31st 6-8 pm, for ages 12 and under. The next County Council meeting will be held November 5, 2013 and will include the council's annual meeting with Legislators on the upcoming 2014 session in Annapolis and the annual meeting of the Department of Transportation. The Legislator's meeting will begin at 6:00 p.m. and the Transportation meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. Councilman Price gave copies of the Economic Development Report to the Mayor and Council.

Mayor Spratt noted that Town Council meetings would be broadcasted in the near future.

Department Reports - Chief of Police Les Hutton reported the Drug Take-Back Program that was held on Saturday October 26th was a success. They took in 20+ lbs. of prescription drugs. The police department appreciates the Town's cooperation. If you have old prescription drugs in your home and are not comfortable having them there, bring them to the police station and they will store them in the evidence locker until the next drug take-back program. Chief Hutton reiterated that Halloween in Hurlock is from 6-8 p.m. and asked the citizens to please be cautious when driving and look out for the children.

Old Business – Mr. Merriken reported that Ordinance No. 2013-1, which is the new Ethics Ordinance, was submitted to the State Ethics Board and was approved. He presented the approved version to the Council and stated it was ready for a vote. Councilman Durham made a Motion to approve Ordinance 2013-1 as presented. Councilman Henry seconded the Motion. With all in favor and none opposed, the Motion was passed and carried with a vote of 5-0.

Clerk Avery announced the Town has 3 Election Supervisors. One of those decided to step down from that position. Thomasina Jackson has agreed to fill that vacant position. Mr. Avery explained that the duties of these election supervisors include counting absentee ballots and provisional votes and certifying they are correct. This is done on Monday after the election at the Election Office in Dorchester County. The other two supervisors are David Carrier and Jack Lewis. Mayor Spratt asked for a Motion to approve Thomasina Jackson to fill the vacant position. Councilman Adams made a Motion to accept Thomasina Jackson as the new Election Supervisor. Councilman Nordstrom seconded the Motion. With a vote of 5-0 all in favor and no one opposed, the Motion was passed and carried.

Attorney Bob Merriken asked Councilman Cephas if he received information that was sent to him via email regarding the Charter Amendments. Councilman Cephas did not recall receiving the email. Councilman Cephas is asking that the hiring and firing process be changed in the Charter to make it fairer for employees of the Town. Mr. Merriken stated he would draft an amendment that could be presented to the Council. There was discussion between Mr. Merriken and Councilman Cephas. Mr. Merriken said he would re-send the email if necessary.

New Business – Councilman Durham introduced Ordinance 2013-2 in which there would be restrictions on how long a town citizen would leave an animal tethered in their yard. Councilman Durham stated that in some municipalities, the tethering of animals is illegal. Councilman Durham made a Motion to approve the introduction of Ordinance 2013-2. Councilman Nordstrom seconded the Motion. Councilman Adams questioned how fines would be handled. Mr. Merriken advised it would be a municipal infraction. Councilman Durham stated animals that are being kenneled would be a different situation. Councilman Adams asked why he is introducing this ordinance now. Councilman Durham responded someone from his district had approached him. The Council agreed that 9 hours would be the limit for an animal to be tethered within a 24-hour period. With a vote of 5-0 and no one opposed, the Motion to approve voting on Ordinance 2013-2 at the next meeting was passed and carried.

Agenda Requests – Ms. Kathleen Clough read a prepared statement (see attached).

Mr. Jack Garris spoke to the Council regarding the ALS house at 300 S. Main Street saying the house should be put on the market and sold.

Councilmember Comments - Councilman Durham stated that with elections coming up this Saturday, he encouraged everyone to get out and vote. He also advised citizens to let their councilmember hear their concerns.

Councilman Cephas said people should know the truth. He would like to see the Town prosper, he wants the Council to get together and go forward and not have their own personal agenda.

Councilman Nordstrom reminded everyone that Monday November 11, 2013 is

Veteran's Day and to please remember the men and women who have fought and died and those still fighting for us.

Councilman Adams wanted to thank Hurlock for the past 4 years he has served. He said he wants the best for the Town and if he does not get re-elected, he will stand behind whoever is elected to his district.

Councilman Henry thanked everyone for the 2 years he served the Town. He chose not to run for office again. Councilman Henry stated he views the council as a family and as often happens in families, the council does not always agree. He encouraged everyone to vote. Councilman Henry said the Town should not sell the ALS house; it could be used by the fire department in the future. He spoke of people saying they wanted a community center. This is something that needs to be structured and run by the community.

Mayor Spratt announced that due to the huge number of people in attendance, the public comment session would be limited to 1 minute.

Public Comment – Paul Grahe read from a flyer that PRMC is offering free flu shots on November 11, 2013 to all veterans and their families. They would need to bring their DD214 with them at the time of their visit.

Monroe Quailes stated he is a veteran from the Army and the Navy. Mr. Quailes felt records that have been kept illegally had hurt him.

Bonnie Keplinger said that Councilman Cephas and Mayor Spratt are products of themselves and she is behind Mayor Spratt's campaign.

Cedric Turner announced that the public debate held last Tuesday by the League of Women Voters went very well.

Jack Lewis asked Councilman Cephas if he had received any feedback on his prior request about the Town water smell and taste. Councilman Cephas answered no. Councilman Cephas questioned the Town water odor and old rusty pipes. Councilman Cephas said they could invite Wastewater Superintendent, Eric (Mr. Barnhart), to the next council meeting to answer questions.

Pat Bovankovich was upset about the cat problem in the Town. She said she had been scratched several times and had to get medicine. Mayor Spratt told her the Town is supposed to meet with Snip & Tuck to discuss the issue.

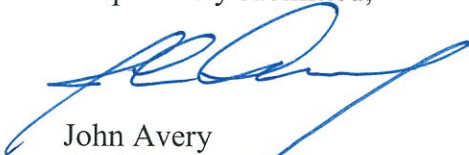
Earl Murphy stated he agreed with Councilman Adams. He is running for the same district that Councilman Adams represents. Mr. Murphy said he would still support the Town no matter who won the seat. Mr. Murphy announced there would be Marshmallows at Murphy's at his home in Woodsedge on Thursday October 31st. He invited everyone to come. He will also have hot dogs.

Dotson
Mr. Charles Dockins stated he is not comfortable having his kids commute to a community center in Cambridge and asked why can't the Town have a center for the young people. Councilman Cephas said that funds could be obtained through grants and town funds. The community should participate. Councilman Adams announced that his building was available if any citizen or group wished to use it for a community center.

Cavalry
Kay McElvey said 20-30 years ago the Town told her if you can get \$2,000.00 together the Town would help. She said she is still waiting.

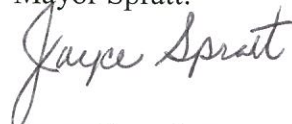
With no more comments, Mayor Spratt asked for a Motion to adjourn. Councilman Nordstrom made a Motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Henry seconded the Motion and with all in favor, the meeting of October 28, 2013 was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

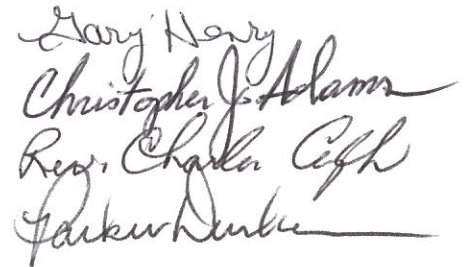

John Avery
Clerk/Treasurer

Approved:

Mayor Spratt:



Councilmembers:



MOTIONS AND VOTES BY COUNCIL MEMBERS
OPEN SESSION MEETING
OCTOBER 15, 2013

Motion made by Councilman Durham, who wished to add under New Business 11a, 2013-2 Ordinance on Tethering. Councilman Cephas, who wished to add under Old Business regulations reviewed by Attorney Merriken on the Charter Amendment, seconded the Motion. With no discussion, the Motion passed with a vote of 5-0

Councilman Nordstrom made a Motion to approve the Minutes of the Open Session Meeting held on October 15, 2013 were approved. Councilman Cephas seconded the Motion. The Motion was passed and carried with a vote of 5-0.

Councilman Durham made a Motion to approve Ordinance 2013-1 as presented. Councilman Henry seconded the Motion. With all in favor and none opposed, the Motion was passed and carried with a vote of 5-0.

Councilman Adams made a Motion to accept Thomasina Jackson as the new Election Supervisor. Councilman Nordstrom seconded the Motion. With a vote of 5-0 all in favor and no one opposed, the Motion was passed and carried.

Councilman Durham made a Motion to approve Ordinance 2013-2. Councilman Nordstrom seconded the Motion. With a vote of 5-0 and no one opposed, the Motion to approve Ordinance 2013-2 was passed and carried.

Councilman Nordstrom made a Motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Henry seconded the Motion and with all in favor, the meeting of October 28, 2013 was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Statement to be incorporated into the
October 28, 2013 Minutes of the Hurlock Mayor & Council Meeting

As the former Clerk/Treasurer of the Town of Hurlock I, Kathleen Clough, would like to present information to the Council and Townspeople of Hurlock to bring clarity to allegations that have been made against Councilman Reverend Charles T. Cephas, Sr. over the course of many years by Mayor Joyce Spratt.

Prior to November 25, 2009 I had never met or even heard of a woman named Joyce Spratt. On the advice of the late former Councilman William Mills, Joyce Spratt contacted me and asked if I would consider helping her as a new Mayor, working with her as the Clerk/Treasurer for the Town of Hurlock. After meeting with her at my home, Mrs. Spratt went to the Council seeking their approval and vote to appoint me to the position and to approve a contract starting December 8, 2009.

Upon being hired and sorting out what needed to be done, Mayor Spratt made it very clear that her number one priority was to "get" former Mayor Don Bradley and Councilman Charles Cephas. Mayor Spratt wanted me to go through all of the files and records to find something that she could use against them and take to the State's Attorney or State Prosecutor to have them investigated. It was her hope that they would be indicted. After a brief overview of records I informed Mayor Spratt that there had not been anything done that was illegal. I told her and her husband, Joseph Spratt, and Councilman Michael Nordstrom, who were also adamant that I focus on finding things for an indictment, that they may not like how Mayor Bradley administered town business, but **he did nothing that was illegal** or outside of his authority or out of line with other Municipalities throughout the Country, and neither had Councilman Charles Cephas or any other Council member.

Mayor Spratt insisted that a more thorough inspection of all of the files be undertaken. Mayor Spratt, Councilman Nordstrom, and Mr. Joseph Spratt were becoming angry that I was taking too long to send information to the Maryland Office of the State Prosecutor, to the extent that Mr. Spratt would yell and curse at me in the Mayor's office, as well as rant to my husband in his place of business, because they feared they would miss the Statute of Limitations. During this time on at least two occasions I stated to Mr. John Avery, who is now the Clerk/Treasurer, that I did not take the job to hurt anyone; I took it to help the Town because of my regard for William Mills.

I compiled the information, developed a spreadsheet of all expenditures and wrote a narrative about former Mayor Don Bradley and Councilman Cephas outlining the activities that Mayor Spratt considered egregious and submitted them to the Office of the State Prosecutor. In response, after careful review, the **State Prosecutor determined** that there had been **no wrongdoing by either party and therefore there was nothing to investigate.**

Mayor Spratt informed me, and I have heard her tell others, that Councilman Cephas charged people \$500 to join his Church; that people he counseled in his job with the Maryland Rural Development Council were asked to make a donation to his church prior to receiving his assistance, that he had done some things that were wrong at MRDC and that he cheated a couple out of their home in Woodsedge with his wrongdoing. Recently Mayor Spratt sent out a letter suggesting voters go to the Maryland Judiciary Case Search website to do a search for cases under his name. Ironically, there are also several entries for Mayor Spratt and another candidate that she supports. I read each case under Reverend Cephas' name and there is not a single felony or criminal conviction, even though Mayor Spratt has told people he is a criminal and a felon. Those are serious lies to tell about another person, and can destroy another person's life and reputation. I also spoke with the State Prosecutor myself just this morning. I shared with him how Police Chief Leslie Hutton stopped me after the last town meeting to tell me that there are "people" who are interested and asking about my license plates and that he wanted to give me a heads up that "People are interested" and that I am "being watched." The State Prosecutor is very aware of what is going on in Hurlock, including the drug and gang activity that is being downplayed by Chief Hutton and mayor Spratt. After all of the allegations and lawsuits that Reverend Cephas has endured, the **State Prosecutor is aware that all of Mayor Spratt's allegations against him have been unfounded**; just as all of the allegations against me have been unfounded. **The State Prosecutor also shared that he knows that Reverend Cephas is a good man with a good heart who wants only to do good and help people, but he sometimes does not come across well.**

Regrettably, I believed everything Mayor Joyce Spratt told me, and much worse, I repeated what she said without verification. Many of you have been taken in with Mayor Spratt's stories about so many people, and many of you have also acted as her surrogate in repeating her lies to other people in town and beyond. According to Joyce Spratt, everyone but she is a liar, including our Senator.

Tonight I would like to publicly apologize to Councilman Reverend Charles Cephas and ask his forgiveness for believing without question Mayor Spratt's vicious gossip that harmed him and

his family and caused him to lose the respect of the public and local and State Officials, and be seen in a negative, but false, light.

I want to also go on the record as saying that there were a lot of things that Mayor Spratt told me about many people that I did not believe, much to her dismay. Mayor Spratt informed me that Councilman Christopher Adams was involved in wrongdoing. Maybe she told some of you the same things. However, her allegations against Councilman Adams were so exaggerated and vulgar that I knew they could not possibly be true; and they are not true. After that, I routinely disregarded her continuous gossip about so many of you who thought you were her friend.

There is nothing more insidious and harmful to a community than gossip and lies. It creates mistrust throughout the Town, pits people against each other and is only destructive; keeping things in chaos. When you add racism and hatred that starts at the top, the Town can never progress.

Last spring after a Council meeting, Town Attorney Hugh Carter Vinson asked if I would sit down and allow him to mediate a meeting with Councilman Cephas in my office. We discussed all of the above allegations against Rev. Cephas, as well as allegations he had made about me. After exchanging documents, including Court and bank documents exonerating Rev. Cephas of all wrongdoing, including false allegations that he caused another family's foreclosure, we both realized that we each had false information. Reverend Cephas and I apologized to each other. Reverend Cephas' lawsuit with the State of Maryland regarding the allegations against him in regard to his executive position at MRDC resulted in the Judge's determination that all allegations were unfounded and Reverend Cephas performed his job in accordance with the law and all professional and ethical standards.

A review of the documents conclude:

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

April 11, 2011

Dear Rev. Cephas:

"You have not been debarred from participating in programs of the Department, and the Department currently is not seeking to debar you from its programs."

Clarence J. Snuggs, Deputy Secretary

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Office of the Inspector General – Investigations

Appraisers Stores Building

103 South Gay Street

Baltimore, MD 21202

July 7, 2011

Subject: **Advice of Case Closing**

Maryland Rural Development Corporation/Charles Cephas

This is to advise that this office has completed its investigation on Maryland Rural Development Corporation/Charles Cephas.

This investigation was initiated based upon **allegations** received from United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Program Staff, alleging that Charles Cephas, Director, Maryland Rural Development Corporation (MRDC), committed HUD Grant fraud, relating to excess fees and charges for providing HUD funded debt counseling services. It was further alleged that Cephas and/or his church was receiving mortgage referral fees from Easy Loan Navigator or Prime Rate Funding.

Clients who received counseling certificates from MRDC were contacted by HUD-OIG, and **no evidence of fraud was uncovered**. Additionally, Cephas' personal and church bank records were obtained and **no evidence of fraud was detected**.

Office of the State Prosecutor

January 4, 2013

Dear Reverend Cephas,

As per your request, this letter serves to memorialize the fact that during our inquiry of Hurlock City mayor Joyce Spratt and now former Town Treasurer Kathy Clough, this office did receive a complaint alleging misconduct by you. The purported wrongful activity, that you improperly submitted requests for reimbursement to the Town of Hurlock, was **found to be without merit**. Consequently, **no criminal investigation was conducted**. Since our Policy prohibits the identification of complainants, that information cannot be provided.

Sincerely,

James I. Cabezas

Chief Investigator

Two weeks ago I met with members of the Hurlock Volunteer Fire Company to set the record straight. While eating in a Hurlock restaurant Reverend Cephas said hello to two firemen. They gave him the cold shoulder. When he asked why, they told him that Mayor Spratt had told them he did not support them and if he was elected Mayor he would cut their funding, raise taxes,

had called them asinine, and other false allegations. Actually, during the 2012 Budget Workshop, Councilman Cephas stated that he believed Hurlock should have a **paid fire department** and the fact that we don't is asinine. At this suggestion, Mayor Spratt snickered at Councilman Cephas and called him an idiot.

Mayor Spratt has misrepresented the truth regarding Councilman Cephas' very proactive support for both departments for 14 years. For their record I gave them the Minutes from meetings of the Mayor and Council in 2007 and 2008, along with information about the 2012 Budget Workshop discussion. It is clear from these Minutes that over the course of three years Councilman Cephas was the designated Councilman who was holding **joint meetings with the Hurlock Volunteer Fire Company and the Hurlock Police Department** for the purpose of **planning the building of a joint facility** on the property where the current Police Station is located now. These meetings had the full support of former Mayor Bradley and the majority of the Council.

It is also a matter of public record that when the Council discussed the purchase of a new fire truck, **Councilwoman Joyce Spratt voted against the purchase of a new vehicle and instead wanted them to purchase used equipment.** It was **Councilman Charles Cephas who supported the Fire Department** to the extent that he argued on behalf of purchasing a new fire truck as a better business decision as it would have a warranty, no mileage and no wear and tear, therefore it would have a much longer serviceable life for the Town.

Mayor Spratt has repeated these tactics against others since taking office, to the extent that she has earned herself, and Hurlock, an unfortunate reputation throughout the County and State.

In early 2010 **Mayor Joyce Spratt came to the Council and requested they pass a Resolution banning the use of take home police cars.** The use of take home cars has been banned since 1985 in the personnel manual. **The Council voted to grant Mayor Spratt's request to ban the use of take home cars with a vote of 4-1. It was only Councilman Charles Cephas who opposed it, and voted against it, and argued for the police officers to have take-home cars.** As a former police officer, Councilman Cephas listed all of the reasons he believed take home police cars are important. When Les Hutton was hired, Mayor Spratt informed him of the Town's policy and the Resolution banning the use of take home police cars. At a public town meeting Mayor Spratt announced to the Council that Chief Hutton agreed with their decision to forbid the use of take home police cars, and had done his own study, and with gas at \$2.40 a gallon, he could not justify the extravagance of take home police cars.

But in the spring of 2012, when gas was almost \$4.00 a gallon, Chief Hutton unilaterally decided that he would allow each police officer, regardless of rank or years on the force, to have a take home car. He did this without the prior approval of the Mayor, and the Mayor did not seek

approval of the Council or ask that they rescind the 2010 Resolution that she had asked them to introduce and pass. Mayor Spratt also failed to do any analysis of the increased costs, and did not bring a budget amendment to the Council. This is a serious violation of the Charter and the law. Even a year later, Mayor Spratt has not taken corrective action and Chief Hutton is acting in violation of the 2010 Resolution.

In August of 2012, Mayor Spratt and Chief Hutton met with members of the police department. I have been informed that they told them that it was I who took away their take home police cars. They also allegedly told them that I was the one who stood in the way of them getting raises. Both of these allegations are lies, and I would never have had the authority or power to do either. Both come under the powers of the governing body, which is the Council. It is on the recordings of Executive Sessions that I was the one who argued on behalf of the employees getting a raise because they had helped cut costs in our efforts to turn things around for the town. Mayor Spratt, Councilman Nordstrom, and Councilman Durham each stated that they opposed raises and that employees should be happy they have a job. Councilman Cephas was very supportive and voted for employees getting a raise in line with inflation and the CPI (Consumer Pricing Index.) These lies by your top elected official and top law enforcement official to turn the police force against me, has put me and my family in danger, and now Chief Hutton has acknowledged directly to me that I am a target.

I have been told that both Mayor Spratt and John Avery have accused me of taking and deleting records. This is another lie. I verified in a letter to Mr. Vinson, Town Attorney, that Chief Hutton had agreed to have my files downloaded to a flash drive and sent to me, so obviously I didn't delete anything. Secondly, every keystroke on every town computer is saved on the Town server and the offsite server of BDK, and cannot be deleted, and cannot be erased from the hard drive. Additionally, I had an external hard drive on my desk that automatically backed up every document I ever created, and those documents are easily retrievable by most people with a basic ability to use a computer. The fact that there is no one proficient in technology for retrieval does not mean that the information is not there.

I have been informed that people in Hurlock hate me because of my support of Councilman Cephas in his bid for Mayor. I really don't have a problem with that, because I know the alternative is not healthy for the Town, and it is time for at least one white person to stand up for truth and against a culture of lies, slander, gossip, inequality, hatred, bullying, intimidation, harassment, and racism, and disregard for the Charter and the laws of Maryland, without a standard of professionalism and ethical conduct by our top elected and appointed officials.